

Catastrophic Incident Annex

Coordinating Agency

Emergency Management

Cooperating Agencies

Police Department

Fire-EMS Department

Emergency Communications Center

All Departments

Roanoke City Schools

American Red Cross

Virginia Department of Health – Roanoke Health Department

Office of Chief Medical Examiner

Virginia Department of Emergency Management

Virginia Funeral Directors Association

Carilion Patient Transport Services

I. Introduction

A. Purpose

The Catastrophic Incident Annex establishes the context and strategy for implementing and coordinating an accelerated, proactive response to an incident where there are mass casualties and destruction within the City boundaries from a single event.

B. Scope

A catastrophic incident is any man-made or natural incident including terrorism and airline incidents that results in extraordinary levels of mass casualties, damage, or disruptions severely affecting the population, infrastructure, environment, economy, moral, and/or government functions. A catastrophic incident could result in sustained impacts over a prolonged period of time. All catastrophic events are Incidents of National Significance.

C. Policies

The strategies in this plan are consistent with the National Response Plan (NRP) and National Incident Management System (NIMS) protocols.

Incident Commanders may need to request assistance from Federal and State authorities. These resources will be provided through Regional Coordination Centers or staging areas.

II. Concept of Operations

A. General

Various Emergency Support Functions may need to be activated depending on the scope and magnitude of an incident. Listed below are functions that are usually needed during a catastrophic incident along with the agencies that will provide these functions.

1. Rescue Operations

Fire-EMS: Locate the injured and provide emergency medical care and transport as well as work to prevent additional injuries or loss of life. Staff Medical, Safety, and Fire Branch, as necessary.

2. Area Security

Police Department & Sheriff's Department: Perimeters of the disaster area must be identified. Scene must be protected and secured. Those who are invariably attracted to such scenes (curiosity seekers, media, and scavengers) must be prevented from penetrating the scene. A Disaster Pass Plan may be implemented to assist in security. Staff Law Enforcement Branch, as necessary.

3. Victim Identification

Office of the Chief Medical Examiner (OCME): Coordinate body identification and cause of death determination. For locating and identifying bodies, the OCME may be assisted by the Police Department. The Crime Scene Section will recover bodies and personal effects. A proper organization system will be implemented and documentation will be made of location where each body/article was found.

4. Body Removal

Office of the Chief Medical Examiner: Will coordinate operations at the site and make a survey and assessment of the situation. Equipment, supplies, and personnel needed to implement an effective removal plan will depend on the number of bodies, condition of remains, environmental condition, and type of terrain. Examiner will give approval before any remains are touched or moved.

5. Holding/Staging Areas

Office of the Chief Medical Examiner: May establish an area to receive bodies as they are moved from the disaster site. Police Department is responsible for establishing and maintaining this area with assistance from Fire-EMS, if necessary. Bodies should not be moved until they have been processed, tagged, and placed into body bags along with personal effects. The reason for a holding/staging area is to ensure that proper tagging has occurred, and that all of the body parts and personal effects are with their respective bodies so that they may be examined together. Unidentifiable parts or tissue must be labeled and given their own body bag or container.

6. Morgue Facilities

Virginia is divided into four medical examiner districts; Northern Virginia District based in Fairfax, Western District based in Roanoke, Central District based in Richmond, and the Tidewater District based in Norfolk. The Virginia EOC will contact the State Office of the Chief Medical Examiner, who may request assistance from the Virginia Funeral Directors Association who is responsible for the statewide coordination of mortuary activities. The Association will operate under the direction of the Medical Examiner. Assistance may also be requested from the U.S. Army's 54th Quartermaster Company-Mortuary Affairs, located in Ft. Lee, VA, the Roanoke Health Department, and the U.S. Public Health Service.

7. Incident Morgue

Office of the Chief Medical Examiner's Office: staff and equip, assistance may be requested from the county. Assistance may include assigning personnel from the Police Department to staff incident morgue teams. The following must be considered with selecting a facility: space, security, communications, electrical provisions including ventilation, accessibility to disaster site, and an assembly point that is removed from examination areas established for friends and relatives.

8. Media Relations

Office of Communications: Will be assisted by the primary response agency and will coordinate with ESF #2 (Communications) and ESF #15 (External Affairs). Briefing for families will be held before any scheduled media briefings, and briefings will be hosted by the OCME and the Office of Public Affairs. The OCME will brief the media on the current situation while the Office of Public Affairs is responsible for the organization of the briefing and ensuring that representatives from all agencies that are involved are present to answer technical questions. A Joint Information Center will be created as necessary for unified message, communication, and media management.

9. Family Assistance Center (FAC)

The FAC will normally be activated with the Catastrophic Plan and will assist families by providing counseling, information on the current situation, a place that families can be reached to assist the Medical Examiner with identification, and an environment in which families can grieve in private. Emergency Management will coordinate with the Police Department for the operation of this center with support from the American Red Cross. All requests for assistance will be submitted to the EOC for coordination, validation, and/or action in accordance with this annex.

Guidelines: The family assistance center will be located away from the disaster scene, media, and incident morgue, and staging areas; an identification system will be implemented to readily identify family members; and family members will be briefed on current developments in the investigation prior to media briefings. In the event of an aircraft accident involving a domestic or foreign air carrier, PL 104-264 Title VII Section 702, (Aviation Disaster Family Assistance Act of 1996) prohibits unsolicited communications with individuals or family members by attorneys or any potential party for litigation, for a period of 30 days from the date of the accident. Identified personnel must inform family members of this prohibition and their privacy must be strictly protected.

B. Organization:

1. Emergency Management

The primary responsibility of Emergency Management will be coordination of resources, specialists, and outside, non-law enforcement agencies such as Health Department, American Red Cross, Office of Medical Examiner, and other logistical needs. As the incident grows, The Emergency Management Director or his/her designee might elect to open the EOC and will coordinate staffing and unified command, following NIMS. At any time deemed

appropriate, the Emergency Manager may elect to declare a local emergency and activate statewide mutual aid agreements for additional assets. The Emergency Management Director or his/her designee is responsible for documentation and reporting to Virginia Emergency Management and the Virginia EOC upon their activation.

2. Police Department - Assessment of the scene to determine resources needed.

- a. Perimeter control and protection of potential crime scene;
- b. Traffic control and rerouting;
- c. Provide a Public Information Officer (PIO) to assist Joint Information Center;
- d. Provide investigators/specialists, as required;
- e. Administer disaster scene pass management system; and
- f. Administer Family Assistance Center pass management plan.

3. Ad-hoc Functions

These functions are the responsibility of the Police Department and may be activated at any time and supported by any qualified personnel.

- a. Investigative Function: Processes the crime scene, conducts witness interviews, and other related tasks. Identified staff will direct these activities.
- b. Incident Morgue Function: May assist the Medical Examiner's Office with the operation of an incident morgue. Assistance will include the identification of bodies, next of kin notification, and processing of personal effects. The function will coordinate with the Medical Examiner's Office and Emergency Management for additional body bags, temporary coolers, or any other equipment or supplies that are needed at the incident morgue.
- c. Hospital Function: The Police Department may designate an officer to coordinate interviews for people who are taken to the local hospital following a catastrophic event.

4. Fire-EMS Department

The primary response agency for most mass fatality events. The police will assist the Fire-EMS Department with operations during the initial response, as well as, control the perimeter of the disaster scene. The primary goal is to contain any and all hazards at the scene, render medical aid and transport the injured. The Incident Commander will direct the Emergency Communications Center, or Emergency Manager if on scene, to contact the medical examiner and convey the following information:

- Cause of the event or type,
- Number of potential bodies,
- Any recommendations.

Arson Investigator will investigate fires that are suspicious in nature, or of unknown origin. In the case of mass fatalities caused by a suspicious fire, the arson investigator would have investigative responsibility and may request

support from the Police Department's Explosive Ordinance Disposal Unit, Criminal Investigations Bureau and/or any other section as appropriate.

5. Federal Bureau of Investigation

Presidential Directive 39, U.S. policy on Counter-terrorism, reaffirms the Federal Bureau of Investigation's lead responsibility in crisis management response. Exercises primary authority to prevent, preempt, and terminate threats or acts of terrorism and to apprehend and prosecute the perpetrators. County agencies or departments provide assistance as required. The City exercises primary authority to respond to the consequences of terrorism; the Federal Emergency Management provides assistance as required.

6. Public Works and Environmental Administrator

Provides structural safety inspections, assess and monitor environmental hazards prior to or in conjunction with search and rescue operations. Conducts damage assessment to determine the extent and reports findings to the EOC. This includes collateral damage assessment.

7. Office of Chief Medical Examiner

The examination and release of human remains falls within the jurisdiction of the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner. Before any actions are taken with the bodies, or an incident morgue is established, the Incident Commander will contact the on-call Assistant Chief Medical Examiner. The Incident Commander will coordinate with the Medical Examiner on what steps are to be followed to process the bodies. The Examiner may contact the U.S. Army's 54th Quarter Master Company, the Virginia Funeral Directors Association, the United States Public Health Service, or the Disaster Mortuary Operational Response Team as needed or request calls be made.

8. National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB)

Lead investigative agency in an incident involving an aircraft, rail, or pipeline that results in loss of life, serious injury, or major damage. The Federal Bureau of Investigation will have primary command and investigative responsibility in cases of willful destruction, such as sabotage, terrorism, etc. NTSB will support as required. It may relinquish investigative responsibility to the Federal Aviation Administration or the City for incidents involving no loss of life and only minor damage. The NTSB will have the primary federal responsibility for facilitating the recovery and identification of fatally injured passengers. Removal of wreckage is the primary responsibility of the air carrier, owner, and or insurance company. In the case of an aircraft accident involving a United States air carrier or a foreign air carrier on U.S. soil, which results in a major loss of life, the "Aviation Disaster Family Assistance Act" of October 9, 1996 gives the NTSB the responsibility of aiding families of aircraft accidents and establishing a Family Assistance Program.

C. General Responsibilities (See Mass Casualty Plan; Fire-EMS for details)

- Establish that a catastrophic incident has occurred;
- Notify all departments and agencies;

- Activate and deploy or prepare to deploy teams, equipment caches, and other resources;
- Identify, prepare, and operationalize facilities critical to supporting the movement and reception of State and Federal resources;
- Establish and maintain communications with incident command to ensure a common and current operating picture regarding critical resource requirements;